

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3617
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 4229

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, SN, TH, US

SUBJECT:SINGAPORE SHIPMENT OF M-16 RIFLES TO THAILAND

REFS: (A) STATE 221565; (B) SINGAPORE 4164

1. I CALLED ON DR. GOH KENG SWEE SEPTEMBER 26 AS SCHEDULED, AND CAREFULLY REVIEWED WITH HIM EACH OF THE ELEMENTS CONTAINED IN PARAGRAPH 5 OF REFTTEL A. DR. GOH LISTENED ATTENTATIVELY, AND RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT "YOUR POINT IS TAKEN" AND "SINGAPORE IS NOT IN THE ARMS EXPORT BUSINESS."

2. BY WAY OF EXPLANATION, DR. GOH STATED THAT GOS HAD BEEN UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE FROM THE THAI TO MAKE THE SHIPMENT, AND IN FACT HAD KEPT THE LST THE THAI HAD SENT TO PICK UP THE M-16'S WAITING FOR THREE WEEKS BEFORE DECIDING TO GO AHEAD. HE FURTHER STATED THAT THE GOS WAS AWARE OF THE LIKELY U.S. CONCERNS, AND FOR THIS REASON HAD INFORMED US AS TO THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE M-16'S HAD BEEN SENT. (THIS WOULD MEAN THAT EMBASSY DATT'S ORIGINAL SOURCE WAS NOT ACTING ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE WHEN HE TOLD US ABOUT THE SHIPMENT, BUT RATHER WAS OPERATING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS.)

3. DR. GOH ALSO INDICATED THAT OUT OF DEFERENCE TO THE THAI THE GOS HAD ACCEPTED ALL OF THE CONTIONS IMPOSED
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BY COLT IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEAL. FORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, THE GOS HAD NOT FOUND THE COLT CONDITIONS UNDULY RIGOROUS. DR. GOH ASKED IF ALL OF THE PAPERWORK FOR THE EXPORT LICENSE HAD YET BEEN COMPLETED BY COLT,

AND APPEARED SURPRISED WHEN I TOLD HIM THAT SUCH WAS NOT THE CASE.

4. COMMENT: I CONSIDER THAT THE POINT HAS INDEED BEEN TAKEN BY THE GOS, AND THAT THE RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES ARE DULY COGNIZANT OF THE USG POSITION. IF A SIMILAR SITUATION WERE TO ARISE AGAIN THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE GOS WOULD NOT PLAY A REPEAT PERFORMANCE, BUT I BELIEVE THERE IS NOW LESS LIKELIHOOD OF ITS DOING SO. IN ANY EVENT, THE CUPBOARD IS BARE -- SINGAPORE'S RESERVE M-16 RIFLE STOCKS ARE DOWN ALMOST TO ZERO, AND PRODUCTION WILL BE CONCENTRATED FOR SOME TIME IN MAKING UP THIS DEFICIENCY.
HOLDRIDGE

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